



ILLINOIS ASSOCIATION OF COURT APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATES

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Support HB3808 (Representative Mary Flowers, D-Chicago) - Illinois CASA through an appropriation from the General Revenue Fund within the Department of Children and Family Services

Illinois Children Need Protection and Care:

The Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) has not done an adequate job protecting children or providing support services to families in crisis, **despite the 2018 budget of \$1.2 billion dollars, or \$75,000 per child.** Illinois has the longest time to permanent placement in the United States and the lowest rate of entry per investigation. Collaboration among child protection stakeholders is key to improving outcomes for children and families.

Direct and Indirect Costs of Abuse and Neglect to the State:

Nearly 17,000 children are in Illinois' juvenile court system because they have been abused or neglected. The average length of stay in foster care in Illinois is 50.8 months. At least 52% of these children experience 3 or more placements. The indirect costs of prolonged foster care impact the welfare system, the criminal justice system, and the health care system in Illinois. Children who remain in the foster care system until 18 are likely to experience the following outcomes as adults: 2% obtain a bachelor's degree or higher, 51% were unemployed, 30% had no health insurance, 25% were homeless, 30% receive public assistance and 54% had at least one mental health problem.

CASA changes outcomes for child victims and saves money:

CASA stands for court appointed special advocate. A CASA is a trained, community volunteer who advocates for the best interests of abused and neglected children who are involved with the child welfare system. CASA volunteers serve in child abuse and neglect cases, Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) cases and sometimes in adoption proceedings. In Illinois there are 31 non-profit CASA programs with nearly 2,500 volunteers who in 2018 advocated for the best interests of 4,184 child victims of abuse and neglect.

- **Safety:** Less than 1% of children assigned a CASA re-entered protective care in 2018.
- **Permanency:** Children assigned a CASA have shorter lengths of time in protective care.
DCFS: 17,481 cases. 4,351 closed. 25% Achieved Permanency (2020 DCFS Budget Briefing)
CASA: 4,482 cases assigned. 1667 closed. 39% annual closure rate.
- **Well-Being:** CASA volunteers are trained to advocate in court for the educational needs and physical and mental health needs of children. There were no serious injury reports or child deaths when a CASA was appointed.

The Court Appointed Special Advocates program is Title IV-E, CAPTA and VOCA eligible. The Family First Act includes provisions for CASA.

Illinois is one of only 6 states that does not have an appropriation for their CASA programs. **Illinois ranks last in achieving permanency for children and last for funding of State CASA offices.** Line item funding for the expansion of the Illinois CASA network is a win-win, as 40 other States have realized. The CASA program is a proven, volunteer-driven, public-private solution that all children deserve access to and will save the State considerable revenue.

Illinois Court Appointed Special Advocates State Legislative Funding Proposal FY 2019-2020

The total amount of funding requested is \$2,885,000.00. The funding has three components:

- (1)** \$2,085,000.00 to be distributed between all qualified CASA programs. The proposed funding formula is a base of \$35,000.00 for the 31 existing local CASA programs and a service performance allocation determined by both child case need and program performance.

- (2)** \$300,000.00 for the Illinois CASA State Office specifically for new program development in the following unserved judicial districts: 1st, 2nd, 4th, 6th, 7th, 8th, 11th and 20th.

- (3)** \$500,000.00 to the Illinois CASA State Office as the lead entity for the CASA network. **With this funding, an additional 1,000 children will be assigned a Court Appointed Special Advocate.**

This funding request aims to replace an inadvertent error from last year's session in HB4594, Fees and Fines (Representative Andersson and Senator Mulroe) which significantly decreased the amount of allocation CASA programs received. This request allows CASA representation in the entire state equitably.

The current contract with DCFS for the operation of Illinois CASA is \$179,085 (\$27 per child served). The State of Illinois ranks last in funding dollars spent per child (\$27.62) across the nation with the surrounding states investing far more resources per child. Missouri (\$93.75), Indiana (\$133.47), Wisconsin (\$396.80), and Iowa (\$2354.63).